



We work with others to protect the health of the people of Washington State by ensuring safe and reliable drinking water.

DWAG 9/13/21



Washington State Department of Health
Office of Drinking Water

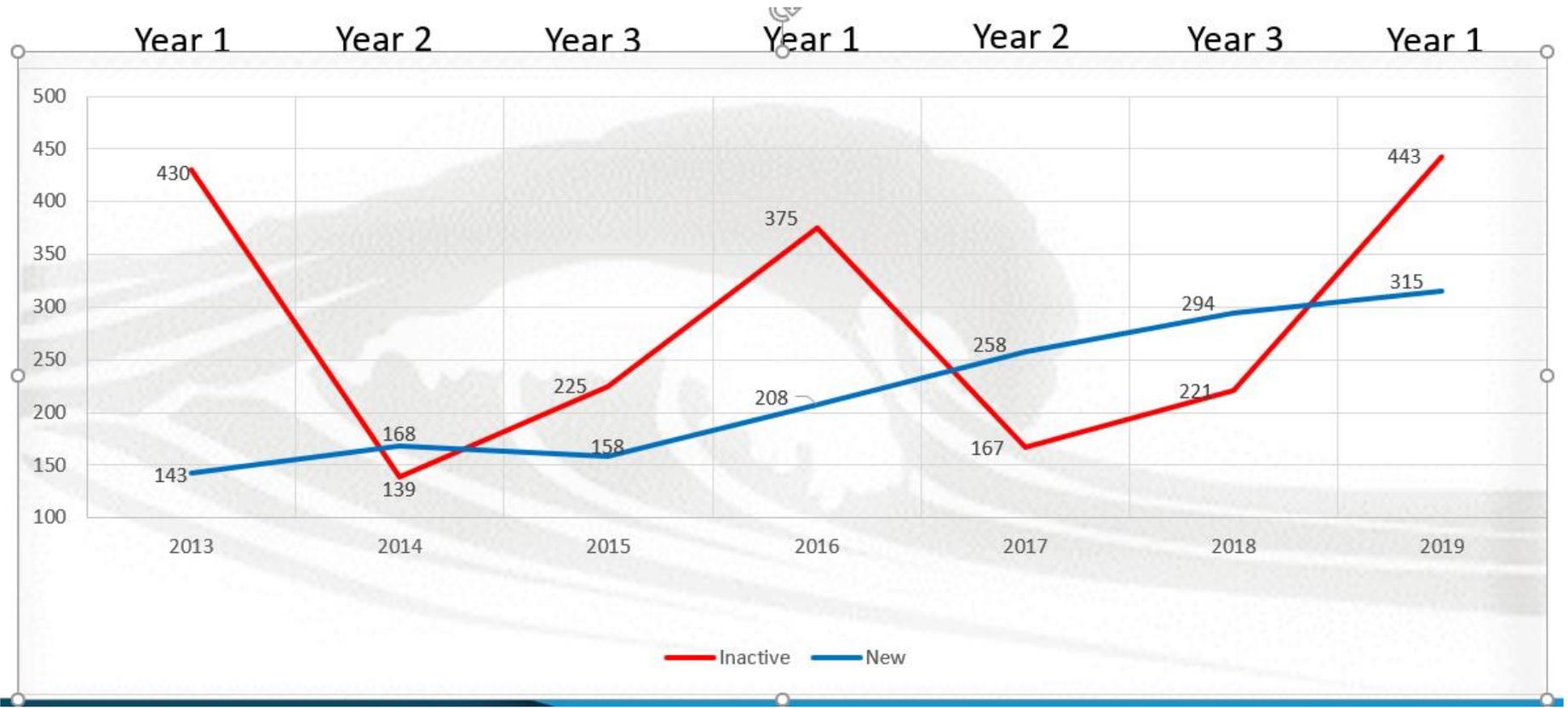
DWAG

- Water Utilities are key community and economic vitality indicators
- Ensure Environmental and public health protection
- We need to hear from this group on water sector issues
- You can always send an email or make a phone call if you're not comfortable speaking to the group

Fun with Numbers

- ~3,000 public drinking water systems required to have a certified operator.
- ~4,000 certified operators and 1,700 Backflow Assembly Testers (BAT).
- We reviewed over 850 exam applications in 2020.
- 224 new certified operators in 2020
- 115 new BAT in 2020
- Over 99% valid email addresses for operators and BAT

Silver Tsunami



Are We Changing with the Times?

- In the last 15 years, the number of certified waterworks operators in Washington remained at about 4,000.
- The general population increased 21 percent.
- The percentage of population growth is declining along the I-5 corridor and increasing in nonmetropolitan areas.
- Population density increased from 85.5 people per square mile to 103.7 people per square mile.
- Increases in customer capacity demands for water resources.
- New or updated technology requiring new skill sets.
- Government regulations that require utilities to train and re-train operators.

Workforce Issues

● Job Availability

- Who, what, when, where, why, and how do we hire?

● Recruitment

- Where are the new operators coming from?

● Retention

- How do we keep Certified Operators in the industry?

Minimum Education and Experience

Certification Level	Minimum Education Requirement (see Table 7 for equivalents)	Minimum Experience Requirement
WTPO 1	12 years	12 months operating experience in a water treatment plant.
WTPO 2	12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 months operating experience in a water treatment plant; and • 18 months additional water-related experience. • Relevant excess education may substitute for additional water-related experience requirement.
WTPO 3	14 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 months operating experience in a Class 2 or higher rated water treatment plant; and • 24 months additional water-related experience. • Relevant excess education may substitute for additional water-related experience requirement.
WTPO 4	16 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 months operating experience in a Class 3 or higher rated water treatment plant; and • 24 months additional water-related experience. • Relevant excess education may substitute for additional water-related experience requirement.

Education vs. Experience

16 years of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High school diploma or GED, and one of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A four-year college degree;• 120 college semester credits;• 180 college quarter credits; or• 180 CEUs from relevant water system training.• One year of operating experience or water-related experience may substitute for each year of education through twelfth grade.• Two years of operating experience or water-related experience may substitute for each year of college education.
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Catch 22

A problematic situation for which the only solution is denied by a circumstance inherent in the problem or by a rule

“Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane, he had to fly them. If he flew them, he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to, he was sane and had to.” *Joseph Heller-1961*

Job Availability

- “We can’t find any qualified candidates”
- “The Union, Board Members, my Boss, or my customers won’t let the utility develop a training program”
- “It’s too expensive to hire someone and give them the experience needed to get certified”
- Why are there no entry level positions in the water sector?

Questions

- How can we support the development of a workforce pipeline?
 - Messaging?
 - Staffing Plans?
 - Back-up Operators?
 - Regulation changes?
 - Consolidation or Regionalization?

Professional Growth

- The deadline is still December 31!
- On-line courses and virtual conferences
- In-person classes
- On-line college courses
- Pass a next level certification exam.

LIHWAP

- On September 30, 2021, [Proclamation 20-23.16](#) ends
- Customer assistance and payment plan options vary across water systems
- Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)
- Free virtual workshop; Thursday, September 16 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m

Contact Information



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